

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

Remarks Honoring the 2012 NCAA Football Champion University of Alabama Crimson Tide

April 15, 2013

The President. Roll Tide!

Audience members. Roll Tide!

The President. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat here. It is a great pleasure to welcome the Alabama Crimson Tide to the White House again. I want to congratulate them on winning their 15th national championship and their third in 4 years. They are starting to learn their way around the White House. *[Laughter]* I was thinking about just having some cots for them here, they're here so often, except we couldn't find any that were big enough. *[Laughter]*

Now, before I begin, I want to extend sympathies to the family of Mal Moore, who passed away last month, after a career that spanned six decades as a player, a coach, and athletic director at Alabama. Mal did more than just about anybody to make this program what it is today. Our prayers go out to all the members of the Alabama community who knew him and loved him.

Now, last year obviously also had a lot of bright spots for the Crimson Tide. From the beginning of spring practice, the best teams in the country had one goal, and that was to try to at least be as good, if not better, than Alabama. But the Tide kept on rising to the occasion, and they never let up.

Back in January, with the whole country watching, this team lined up against the number-one ranked, undefeated Fighting Irish of Notre Dame and dominated from the first possession. At halftime it was 28 to 0. That's when I stopped watching. *[Laughter]* When the clock ran out, it was 42 to 14. And they left no doubt who was the best team in the country. And after the game, the Notre Dame athletic director said: "They're not just better than us. They're better than everyone."

And that was no accident. A few days after winning the title last year, Coach Saban was already back to work. And even after losing some pretty big names in the draft last year, he and his terrific coaching team made sure that they did not lose a step.

A.J. McCarron showed the kind of poise that very few 22-year-olds possess, passing for more than 2,900 yards and 30 touchdowns on the season. I hear he's coming back for 1 more year, because apparently the rest of the SEC defenses haven't suffered enough. *[Laughter]* So he's going to subject them to a little more pain.

Then there were the seniors, who finished their 4 years with a combined record of 49 and 5, which I think is pretty good. Barrett Jones ended his career as one of the most decorated football players in Alabama history, even playing in the national championship game with torn ligaments in his foot. After the game, he said, "It was painful, but you couldn't have pulled me off the field with a tractor." And I don't think he was joking. I think that's true. *[Laughter]*

This title also belongs to everyone who helped these young men get to where they are today: family and friends, high school coaches and loved ones, trainers, staff, grocers. *[Laughter]* These guys eat a lot. It belongs to every student who came to every game, all the fans who yelled "roll Tide" at kickoff and cheered on the Million Dollar Band.

In Miami, on the night the Tide won the championship, one Notre Dame fan apparently asked if "roll Tide" is a noun or a verb, to which another fan dressed head to toe in crimson replied, "It's a way of life." [*Laughter*]

And that way of life has created legends like Bear Bryant and Joe Namath. It's also a legacy carried on by this team and generations of fans who will fill Bryant-Denny Stadium to the rafters on Saturday afternoons.

So obviously everybody here has a lot to be proud of. I want to congratulate Alabama one more time on a great season. I want to wish the players luck who will be taking part in the NFL draft next year. And since I'll be around for 4 more football seasons, I expect I just might see these guys again before I leave.

So roll Tide! Thank you.

Coach.

Head Coach Nicholas L. Saban. Mr. President, we certainly appreciate what you do for our country. It's certainly special for you to take the time to honor our team, which we're very proud of their accomplishments relative to all of our fans, all of our supporters, all of our coaches and players. And this is really a special occasion and something you never really get used to. So we really appreciate it.

And we do have something that we want to present you with today.

[*At this point, the President was presented with a jersey.*]

And I might say, we're kind of keeping inventory of what we've been giving you, and now you have a full uniform. You're an official member of the team. [*Laughter*] And I will have a meeting later with you to decide how much playing time you're going to get. [*Laughter*]

The President. I think we should keep me on the bench. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:04 p.m. on the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John B. Swarbrick, Jr., vice president and director of athletics, University of Notre Dame; Raymond Anthony "A.J." McCarron, Jr., quarterback, Barrett Jones, offensive lineman, University of Alabama football team.

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